

Our top 10 Scope 3 priorities

Scope 3 carbon emissions are indirect emissions from sources outside of an organisation's direct control – from our suppliers, staff, students and visitors - and make up over 90% of The University of Manchester's carbon footprint. There are 15 different categories covering a wide range of activities such as buying goods and services, waste and travel.

To focus our efforts on the areas where we can make the most impact in reducing our Scope 3 emissions, we have calculated our top 10 priorities. The methodology we used looked at 33 different Scope 3 subcategories and evaluated them by:

- The size of carbon emissions (based on 2022/23 data)
- A 'priority' survey which asked our staff and students what they thought the most important areas are to address (carried out in February 2025 and received 127 responses)
- 'Difficultly' interviews to understand how easy or hard it would be to deliver carbon reductions and what challenges there may be (undertaken in February 2025 with 42 experts from across the University)

When this information was analysed, we decided to combine some categories as the actions to reduce carbon in those areas were the same, for example "food and drink" and "catering services". We then applied the following weightings to our calculations:

- 50% emissions size
- 30% priority
- 20% difficulty

This prioritised our top 10 as:

	Category	Description	tCO2e	Actions taken to date
1.	Student travel home (international)	Students travelling home outside of the UK. It's assumed they take two round trips a year by plane.	154,108	We have introduced graduation ceremonies in several countries so graduands based abroad, and their families, do not have to travel to Manchester to graduate.
2.	Computer supplies and services *	The two main drivers of this category are 'software as a service including hosting' and IT software and associated licenses. The rest is made up mainly of server storage or networking equipment, desktops, laptops and tablets, computer and printer consumables, and magnetic and optical media.	58,872	An IT Sustainability Plan has been drafted and we have held two IT amnesties to collect unwanted IT for recycling.
3.	Laboratory equipment *	Includes everything used or purchased across our laboratories such as tissue culture, scintillation fluids, glassware, pharmaceuticals, blood and human tissue, alcohols and clothing. The main drivers are chemicals, gas and refrigerants, laboratory specialist equipment, and consumables and disposables.	41,576	64% of our labs are accredited to LEAF , the sustainable laboratories standard. We are also signatories to the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice.
4.	Pensions and investment	Only the UMSS pension is included in this calculation. In future, we will also include USS and GMPF which significantly increases the carbon emissions in this category. The fund is made up of equity, Government bonds, and corporate debt. Investments made to generate a return for the University. 81% is made up of 3 investment funds Ninety One (Global Equity), Ruffer (Multi Asset) and Mercer (Absolute Return Fixed Income).	30,679	We have calculated the carbon emissions from our three main pension funds. We have exceeded our 50% target for reduction in the weighted averaged carbon intensity (WACI) of equity holdings by 2027 by achieving a 67% reduction. We've also exceeded our 40% target for reduction in the WACI within the investment grade credit allocation by 2027 with a 45% reduction from the benchmark figure. More details are in our Responsible Investment Report .
5.	Professional and bought in services *	Includes a wide range of different professional services under 16 different classifications. The biggest are accountancy, recruitment, insurance, conferencing, banking, advertising, and training courses.	29,326	We have started using the NETpositive supplier tools to provide our suppliers with the ability to make environmental actions plans and for us to see their carbon data.
6.	Capital goods *	This only relates to capital goods associated with the refurbishment or construction of our estate such as 'capital projects' (the biggest driver), and plant purchase and hire, boilers, air conditioning and generators, as well as the hire or purchase of temporary or mobile buildings.	13,634	We have started using the NETpositive supplier tools to provide our suppliers with the ability to make environmental actions plans and for us to see their carbon data.
7.	Business travel	Staff business travel UK or international. Based on rail, plane, ferry and road, and includes hotel stays	11,313	We have met our target to limit annual emissions from air travel to 50% of our 2018/19 level (pre Covid-19 pandemic). This was supported by the introduction of a sustainable travel choices top-up fund to cover additional costs that arise from making sustainable travel choices rather than flying.
8.	Staff and student commuting	Staff travelling to and from work. 63% of emissions are coming from car travel, the 2nd largest is train travel at 13%. Students	10,264	We have updated our sustainable travel and car parking plans and policies to ensure that they complement each other and support a

		commuting during term time from their accommodation to campus. Approx 66% of emissions are from taking the bus, and 19% from travel in their own car.		transition to sustainable modes of travel. We have also introduced an app, CommuteUoM, to support staff and students to commute sustainably.
9.	Estates services *	Equipment and services involved with the upkeep and day to day running of the estate. Mainly made up of services such as pest control, heavy duty cleaning, scaffolding, plumbing, carpentry, fencing and general building repairs and maintenance.	7,576	We have started using the NETpositive supplier tools to provide our suppliers with the ability to make environmental actions plans and for us to see their carbon data.
10.	Food and drink, catering services	Food and drink sold from university owned and managed food outlets (excludes concessions and the Student Union). The provision of services, food, and drink for special occasions, events, and meetings. This includes all types of food and beverage raw materials, as well as table decorations, watercoolers, vending equipment, and tableware and table coverings. The main drivers are alcohol, bar equipment, bakery, and catering services.	2,815	Our catering services have achieved a three-star rating (the highest possible accreditation) in the 2025 Food Made Good Standard awarded by the Sustainable Restaurant Association.
Total			360,163	

*based on spend data

Table 1: carbon emissions from our top 10 priorities (2022/23 data)

These top 10 categories make up 73% of our total Scope 3 emissions. They will form the basis of our Scope 3 framework which identifies actions we will take to reduce carbon emissions in these areas.

Progress to date

We have collected three years of [Scope 3 data](#). We first published our Scope 3 carbon emissions in 2023 using 2018/19 as the baseline (this baseline was chosen as the last “normal” year pre-covid so the data was not skewed e.g. a reduction in air travel). We have since published our 2022/23 and 2023/24 data and have had some of these categories externally verified for accuracy. Now that we have a good understanding of our Scope 3 carbon footprint, our focus going forward will be on action to reduce these carbon emissions.

Next steps

The University’s strategy to 2035, [From Manchester for the World](#), commits us to a target of net zero Scope 3 emissions by 2050. We are currently refreshing our Environmental Sustainability Plan as well as writing a Scope 3 framework which will set out what we want to achieve in the next five years to move us towards meeting this target.

Please contact lucy.millard@manchester.ac.uk to find out more about how we are reducing our Scope 3 emissions.